SERMON

Preached in the London Church of the Jesuit Fathers

AT THE REQUIEM MASS

FOR THE REPOSE OF THE SOUL

OF

JAMES ROBERT HOPE SCOTT, ESQ., Q.C.

BY

JOHN HENRY NEWMAN,

OF THE ORATORY.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Sermon, I know well, is quite unworthy of its subject; moreover, when read, it will, I much fear, come short of the expectations both of those who heard it delivered and of those who have heard of it. Words spoken by mourner to mourners, when hearts are open and sensibilities awake, have a life in them which departs with their utterance; and, on being written down and read, are but memorials of their own tameness and impotence.

Those, however, who so lovingly asked me to speak, now ask me to put on paper what I said. They have the best right to decide in this matter; and, in complying with their wishes, at least I have the mournful pleasure of recording the long friendship which it was my joy and pride to have with one who was beloved and is lamented by so many.

J. H. N.

May 18th, 1873.

A MEMORIAL.

Ep. 1 Joan. ii. 17.

"*Mundus transit et concupiscentia ejus: qui autem facit voluntatem Dei, manet in æternum.*"

"*The world passeth away, and the desire thereof: but he that doeth the will of God, abideth for ever.*"

I HAVE been asked by those whose wish at such a moment is a command, to say a few words on the subject of the sorrowful, the joyful solemnity, which has this morning brought us together. A few words are all that is necessary, all that is possible;—just so many as are sufficient to unite the separate thoughts, the separate memories, the separate stirrings of affection, which are awakened in us by the presence, in our midst, of what remains on earth of the dear friend, of the great soul, whom we have lost,—sufficient to open a communication and create a sympathy between mind and mind, and to be a sort of testimony of one to another in behalf of feelings which each of us has in common with all.

Yet how am I the fit person even for as much as this? I can do no more than touch upon some of those many points which the thought of him suggests to me; and, whatever I may know of him, and say of him, how can this be taken as the measure of one whose mind had so many aspects, and who must, in consequence, have made such distinct impressions, and exercised such various claims, on the hearts of those who came near him?

It is plain, without my saying it, that there are those who knew him far better than I could know him. How can I be the interpreter of their knowledge or their feelings? How can I hope by any words of mine to do a service to those, who knew so well the depths of his rare excellence by a continuous daily intercourse with him, and by the recurring special opportunities given to them of its manifestation?

I only know what he was to me. I only know what his loss is to me. I only know that he is one of those whose departure hence has made the heavens dark to me. But I have never lived with him, or travelled with him; I have seen him from time to time; I have visited him; I have corresponded with him; I have had mutual confidences with him. Our lines of duty have lain in very different directions. I have known him as friend knows friend in the tumult and the hurry of life. I have known him well enough to know how much more there was to know in him; and to look forward, alas! in vain, to a time when, in the evening and towards the close of life, I might know him more. I have known him enough to love him very much, and to sorrow very much, that here I shall not see him again. But then I reflect, if I, who did not know him as he might be known, suffer as I do, what must be their suffering who knew him so well?

1. I knew him first, I suppose, in 1837 or 1838, thirty-five or six years ago, a few years after he had become Fellow of Merton College. He expressed a wish to know me. How our friendship grew I cannot

tell; I must soon have been intimate with him, from the recollection I have of letters which passed between us; and by 1841 I had recourse to him, as a sort of natural adviser, when I was in difficulty. From that time I ever had recourse to him, when I needed advice, down to his last illness. On my first intimacy with him he had not reached the age of thirty. I was many years older; yet he had that about him, even when a young man, which invited and inspired confidence. It was difficult to resist his very presence. True, indeed, I can fancy those who saw him but once and at a distance, surprised and perplexed by that lofty fastidiousness and keen wit which were natural to him; but such a misapprehension of him would vanish forthwith when they drew near to him, and had actual trial of him; especially, as I have said, when they had to consult him, and had experience of the simplicity, seriousness, and (I can use no other word) the sweetness of his manner, as he threw himself at once into their ideas and feelings, listened patiently to them, and spoke out the clear judgment which he formed of the matters which they had put before him.

This is the first and the broad view I am led to take of him. He was, emphatically, a friend in need. And this same considerateness and sympathy with which he met those who asked the benefit of his opinion in matters of importance was, I believe, his characteristic in many other ways in his intercourse with those towards whom he stood in various relations. He was always prompt, clear, decided, and disinterested. He entered into their pursuits, though dissimilar to his own;

he took an interest in their objects; he adapted himself to their dispositions and tastes; he brought a strong and calm good sense to bear upon their present or their future; he aided and furthered them in their doings by his co-operation. Thus he drew men around him; and when some grave question or undertaking was in agitation, and there was, as is wont, a gathering of those interested in it, then, on his making his appearance among them, all present were seen to give to him the foremost place, as if he had a claim to it by right; and he, on his part, was seen gracefully, and without effort, to accept what was conceded to him, and to take up the subject under consideration; throwing light upon it, and, as it were, locating it, pointing out what was of primary importance in it, what was to be aimed at, and what steps were to be taken in it. I am told that, in like manner, when residing on his property in France, he was there too made a centre for advice and direction on the part of his neighbours, who leant upon him and trusted him in their own concerns, as if he had been one of themselves. It was his unselfishness, as well as his practical good sense, which won upon them.

Such a man, when, young and ardent, with his advantages of birth and position, he entered upon the public world, as it displays itself upon its noblest and most splendid stage at Westminster, might be expected to act a great part and to rise to eminence in the profession which he had chosen. Not for certain; for the refinement of mind, which was one of his most observable traits, is in some cases fatal to a man's success in public life. There are those who cannot mix freely with their

fellows, especially not with those who are below their own level in mental cultivation. They are too sensitive for a struggle with rivals, and shrink from the chances which it involves. Or they have a shyness, or reserve, or pride, or self-consciousness, which restrains them from lavishing their powers on a mixed company, and is a hindrance to their doing their best, if they try. Thus their public exhibition falls short of their private promise. Now if there was a man who was the light and the delight of his own intimates, it was he of whom I am speaking; and he loved as tenderly as he was beloved, so that he seemed made for domestic life.

Again, there are various departments in his profession, in which the particular talents which I have been assigning to him might have had full play, and have led to authority and influence, without any need or any opportunity for those more brilliant endowments by which popular admiration and high distinction are attained. It was by the display of talents of an order distinct from clearness of mind, acuteness, and judgment, that he was carried forward at once, as an advocate, to that general recognition of his powers, which was the response that greeted his first great speech, delivered in a serious cause before an august assembly. I think I am right in saying that it was in behalf of the Anglican Chapters, threatened by the reforming spirit of the day, that he then addressed the House of Lords; and the occasion called for the exercise, not only of the talents which I have already dwelt upon, but for those which are more directly oratorical. And these were not wanting. I never heard him speak; but I believe he

had, in addition to that readiness and fluency of language, or eloquence, without which oratory cannot be, those higher gifts which give to oratory its power and its persuasiveness. I can well understand, from what I knew of him in private, what these were in his instance. His mien, his manner, the expression of his countenance, his youthfulness—I do not mean his youth, but his youthfulness of mind, which he never lost to the last,—his joyous energy, his reasonings so masterly, yet so prompt, his tact in disposing of them for his purpose, the light he threw upon obscure, and the interest with which he invested dull subjects, his humour, his ready resource of mind in emergencies; gifts such as these, so rare, yet so popular, were necessary for his success, and he had them at command. On that occasion of his handselling them to which I have referred, it was the common talk of Oxford, how the most distinguished lawyer of the day, a literary man and a critic, on hearing the speech in question, pronounced his prompt verdict upon him in the words, "That young man's fortune is made." And indeed it was plain to those who were in a position to forecast the future, that there was no prize, as it is called, of public life, to which that young man might not have aspired, if only he had had the will.

2. This, then, is what occurs to me to say in the first place, concerning the dear friend of whom we are now taking leave. Such as I have described, were the prospects which opened upon him on his start in life. But now, secondly, by way of contrast, what came of

them? He might, as time went on, almost have put out his hand and taken what he would of the honours and rewards of the world. Whether in Parliament, or in the Law, or in the branches of the Executive, he had a right to consider no station, no power, absolutely beyond his reach. His contemporaries and friends, who fill, or have filled, the highest offices in the State, are, in the splendour of their several careers, the illustration of his capabilities and his promise. But, strange as it may appear at first sight, his indifference to the prizes of life was as marked as his qualifications for carrying them off. He was singularly void of ambition. To succeed in life is almost a universal passion. If it does not often show itself in the high form of ambition, this is because few men have an encouragement in themselves or in their circumstances to indulge in dreams of greatness. But that a young man of bold, large, enterprising mind, of popular talents, of conscious power, with initial successes, with great opportunities, one who carried with him the good-will and expectation of bystanders, and was cheered on by them to a great future, that he should be dead to his own manifest interests, that he should be unequal to the occasion, that he should be so false to his destiny, that his ethical nature should be so little in keeping with his gifts of mind, may easily be represented, not only as strange, but as a positive defect, or even a fault. Why are talents given at all, it may be asked, but for use? What are great gifts but the correlatives of great work? We are not born for ourselves, but for our kind, for our neighbours, for our country: it is but

selfishness, indolence, a perverse fastidiousness, an unmanliness, and no virtue or praise, to bury our talent in a napkin, and to return it to the Almighty Giver just as we received it.

This is what may be said, and it is scarcely more than a truism to say it; for undoubtedly, who will deny it? Certainly we owe very much to those who devote themselves to public life, whether in the direct service of the State or in the prosecution of great national or social undertakings. They live laborious days, of which we individually reap the benefit; nevertheless, admitting this fully, surely there are other ways of being useful to our generation still. It must be recollected, that in public life a man of elevated mind does not make his own self tell upon others simply and entirely. He is obliged to move in a groove. He must act with other men; he cannot select his objects, or pursue them by means unadulterated by the methods and practices of minds less elevated than his own. He can only do what he feels to be second-best. He proceeds on the condition of compromise; and he labours at a venture, prosecuting measures so large or so complicated that their ultimate issue is uncertain.

Nor of course can I omit here the religious aspect of this question. As Christians, we cannot forget how Scripture speaks of the world, and all that appertains to it. Human Society, indeed, is an ordinance of God, to which He gives His sanction and His authority; but from the first an enemy has been busy in its depravation. Hence it is, that while in its substance it is divine, in its circumstances, tendencies, and results it has much of

evil. Never do men come together in considerable numbers, but the passion, self-will, pride, and unbelief, which may be more or less dormant in them one and one, bursts into a flame, and becomes a constituent of their union. Even when faith exists in the whole people, even when religious men combine for religious purposes, still, when they form into a body, they evidence in no long time the innate debility of human nature, and in their spirit and conduct, in their avowals and proceedings, they are in grave contrast to Christian simplicity and straightforwardness. This is what the sacred writers mean by "the world," and why they warn us against it; and their description of it applies in its degree to all collections and parties of men, high and low, national and professional, lay and ecclesiastical.

It would be hard, then, if men of great talent and of special opportunities were bound to devote themselves to an ambitious life, whether they would or not, at the hazard of being accused of loving their own ease, when their reluctance to do so may possibly arise from a refinement and unworldliness of moral character. Surely they may prefer more direct ways of serving God and man; they may aim at doing good of a nature more distinctly religious, at works, safely and surely and beyond all mistake meritorious; at offices of kindness, benevolence, and considerateness, personal and particular; at labours of love and self-denying exertions, in which their right hand knows nothing that is done by their left. As to our dear friend, I have already spoken of the influence which he exercised on all around him, on friends or strangers with whom he was

connected in any way. Here was a large field for his active goodness, on which he did not neglect to exert himself. He gave others without grudging his thoughts, time, and trouble. He was their support and stay. When wealth came to him, he was free in his use of it. He was one of those rare men who do not merely give a tithe of their increase to their God; he was a fount of generosity ever flowing. It poured out on every side; in religious offerings, in presents, in donations, in works upon his estates, in care of his people, in alms-deeds. I have been told of his extraordinary care of families left in distress, of his aid in educating them and putting them out in the world, of his acts of kindness to poor converts, to single women, and to sick priests; and I can well understand the solicitous and persevering tenderness with which he followed up such benevolences towards them from what I have seen in him myself. He had a very retentive memory for their troubles and their needs. It was his largeness of mind which made him thus open-hearted. As all his plans were on a large scale, so were his private charities. And when an object was public and required the support of many, then he led the way by a munificent contribution himself. He built one church on his property at Loch Shiel; and another at Galashiels, which he had intended to be the centre of a group of smaller ones round about; and he succeeded in actually planting one of these at Selkirk. Nor did he confine himself to money gifts: it is often more difficult to surrender what we have made our own personally, than what has never come actually into our tangible possession. He bought books freely,

theological, historical, and of general literature; but his love of giving was greater than his love of collecting. He could not keep them; he gave them away again; he may be said to have given away whole libraries. Little means has any one of determining the limits of his generosity. I have heard of his giving or offering for great objects sums so surprising, that I am afraid to name them. He alone knows the full measure of his bounties, who inspired, and will reward it. I do not think he knew it himself. I am led to think he did not keep a strict account of what he gave away. Certainly I know one case in which he had given to a friend many hundreds, and yet seemed to have forgotten it, and was obliged to ask him when he had done so.

I should trust that, in what I am saying, I have not given any one the impression that he was inconsiderate and indiscriminate in giving. To have done this would have been to contradict my experience of him and my intention. As far as my opportunities of observing him extended, large as were his bounties and charities, as remarkable was the conscientious care with which he inquired into the nature and circumstances of the cases for which his aid was solicited. He felt he was but the steward of Him who had given him what he gave away.

He gave away as the steward of One to whom he must give account. There are at this time many philanthropic and benevolent men who think of man only, not of God, in their acts of liberality. I have already said enough to show that he was not one of these. I have implied the presence in him of that sense

of religion, or religiousness, which was in fact his intimate and true life. And indeed liberality such as his, so incessant and minute, so well ordered, and directed too towards religious objects, almost of itself evidences its supernatural origin. But I insist on it, not only for its own sake, but also because it has a bearing upon that absence of ambition, which in a man so energetic, so influential, is a very remarkable point of character. Viewed in itself, it might be, even though not an Epicurean selfishness, still a natural temper, the temper of a magnanimous mind, such as might be found in ancient Greece or Rome, as well as in modern times. But in truth in him it was much more than a gift of nature; it was a fruit and token of that religious sensitiveness which had been bestowed on him from above. If it really was the fact, that his mind and heart were fixed upon divine objects, this at once accounts for what was so strange, so paradoxical in him in the world's judgment, his distaste for the honours and the pageants of earth; and fixed, assuredly they were, upon the invisible and eternal. It was a lesson to all who witnessed it, in contrast with the appearance of the outward man, so keen and self-possessed amid the heat and dust of the world, to see his real inner secret self from time to time gleam forth from beneath the working-day dress in which his secular occupations enveloped him.

I cannot do justice by my words to the impression which in this respect he made on me. He had a tender conscience, but I mean something more than that—I mean the emotion of a heart always alive and awake at

the thought of God. When a religious question came up suddenly in conversation, he had no longer the manner and the voice of a man of the world. There was a simplicity, earnestness, gravity in his look and in his words, which one could not forget. It seemed to me to speak of a loving desire to please God, a single-minded preference for His service over every service of man, a resolve to approach Him by the ways which He had appointed. It was no taking for granted that to follow one's own best opinion was all one with obeying His will; no easy persuasion that a vague, obscure sincerity in our conclusions about Him and our worship of Him was all that was required of us, whether those conclusions belonged to this school of doctrine or that. That is, he had deep within him that gift which St. Paul and St. John speak of, when they enlarge upon the characteristics of faith. It was the gift of faith, of a living, loving faith, such as "overcomes the world" by seeking "a better country, that is, a heavenly." This it was that kept him so "unspotted from the world" in the midst of worldly engagements and pursuits.

No wonder, then, that a man thus-minded should gradually have been led on into the Catholic Church. Judging as we do from the event, we thankfully recognize in him an elect soul, for whom, in the decrees of Omnipotent Love, a seat in heaven has been prepared from all eternity,—whose name is engraven on the palms of those Hands which were graciously pierced for his salvation. Such eager, reverential thoughts of God as his, prior to his recognizing the Mother of Saints, are surely but the first tokens of a predestination which terminates in

heaven. That straightforward, clear, good sense which he showed in secular matters did not fail him in religious inquiry. There are those who are practical and sensible in all things save in religion; but he was consistent; he instinctively turned from bye-ways and cross-paths, into which the inquiry might be diverted, and took a broad, intelligible view of its issues. And, after he had been brought within the Fold, I do not think I can exaggerate the solicitude which he all along showed, the reasonable and prudent solicitude, to conform himself in all things to the enunciations and the decisions of Holy Church; nor, again, the undoubted conviction he has had of her superhuman authority, the comfort he has found in her sacraments, and the satisfaction and trust with which he betook himself to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, to the glorious St. Michael, to St. Margaret, and all Saints.

3. I will make one remark more. I have spoken, first, of his high natural gifts, of his various advantages for starting in life, and of his secular prospects. Next, in contrast with this first view of him, I have insisted on his singular freedom from ambition, and have traced it to that religiousness of mind which was so specially his; to his intimate sense of the vanity of all secular distinction, and his supreme devotion to Him who alone is "Faithful and True." And now, when I am brought to the third special feature of his life, as it presents itself to me, I find myself close to a sacred subject, which I cannot even touch upon without great reverence and something of fear.

We might have been led to think that a man already severed in spirit, resolve, and acts from the world in which he lived, would have been granted by his Lord and Saviour to go forward in his course freely, without any unusual trials, such as are necessary in the case of common men for their perseverance in the narrow way of life. But those for whom God has a love more than ordinary He watches over with no ordinary jealousy; and, if the world smiles on them, He sends them crosses and penances so much the more. He is not content that they should be by any common title His; and, because they are so dear and near to Him, He provides for them afflictions to bring them nearer still. I hope it is not presumptuous thus to speak of the inscrutable providences of God. I know that He has His own wise and special dealings with every one of us, and that what He determines for one is no rule for another. I am contemplating, and, if so be, interpreting, His loving ways and purposes only towards the very man before us.

Now, so it was, there was just one aspect of this lower world which he might innocently love; just one, in which life had charms for a heart as affectionate as it was religious. I mean that assemblage of objects which are included under the dear name of Home. If there was rest and solace to be found on earth, he found it there. Is it not remarkable, then, that in this, his sole earthly sanctuary, He who loved him with so infinite a love met him, visited him, not once or twice, but again and again, with a stern rod of chastisement? Stroke after stroke, blow after blow, stab after stab, was dealt

against his very heart. "Great and wonderful are Thy works, O Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, O King of ages. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and magnify Thy name? for Thou only art holy." I may speak with more vivid knowledge of him here than in other respects, for I was one of the confidants of his extreme suffering under the succession of terrible inflictions, which left wounds never to be healed. They ended only with his life; for the complaint, which eventually mastered him, was brought into activity by his final bereavement. Nay, I must not consider even that great bereavement his final one; his call to go hence was itself the final agony of that tender, loving heart. He who had in time past been left desolate by others, was now to leave others desolate. He was to be torn away, as if before his time, from those who, to speak humanly, needed him so exceedingly. He was called upon to surrender them in faith to Him who had given them. It was about two hours before his death, with this great sacrifice, as we may suppose, this solemn summons of his Supreme Lord confronting him, that he said, with a loud voice, "Thy will be done;" adding his favourite prayer, so well known to us all, "Fiat, laudetur, atque in æternum superexaltetur, sanctissima, altissima, amabilissima voluntas Dei in omnibus." They were almost his last words.

We too must say, after him, "Thy will be done." Let us be sure that those whom God loves He takes away, each of them, one by one, at the very time best for their eternal interests. What can we, in sober

earnest, wish, save that very Will of God? Is He not wiser and more loving than we are? Could we wish him back whom we have lost? Who is there of us who loves him most but would feel the cruelty of recalling to this tumultuous life, with its spiritual perils and its dark future, a soul who is already rejoicing in the end and issue of his trial, in salvation secured, and heaven begun in him? Rather, who would not wish to have lived his life, and to have died his death? How well for him that he lived, not for man only, but for God! What are all the interests, pleasures, successes, glories of this world, when we come to die? What can irreligious virtue, what can innocent family affection do for us, when we are going before the Judge, whom to know and love is life eternal, whom not to know and not to love is eternal death?

O happy soul, who hast loved neither the world nor the things of the world apart from God! Happy soul, who, amid the world's toil, hast chosen the one thing needful, that better part which can never be taken away! Happy soul, who, being the counsellor and guide, the stay, the light and joy, the benefactor of so many, yet hast ever depended simply, as a little child, on the grace of thy God and the merits and strength of thy Redeemer! Happy soul, who hast so thrown thyself into the views and interests of other men, so prosecuted their ends, and associated thyself in their labours, as never to forget there is one Holy Catholic Roman Church, one Fold of Christ and Ark of salvation, and never to neglect her ordinances or to trifle with her word! Happy soul, who, as we believe, by thy continual alms-

deeds, offerings, and bounties, hast blotted out such remains of daily, recurring sin and infirmity as the sacraments have not reached! Happy soul, who, by thy assiduous preparation for death, and the long penance of sickness, weariness, and delay, hast, as we trust, discharged the debt that lay against thee, and art already passing from penal purification to the light and liberty of heaven above!

And so farewell, but not farewell for ever, dear James Robert Hope Scott! He is gone from us, but only gone before us. We then must look forward, not backward. We shall meet him again, if we are worthy, in "Mount Sion, and the heavenly Jerusalem," in "the company of many thousands of angels, the Church of the first-born who are written in the heavens," with "God, the Judge of all, and the spirits of the just made perfect, and Jesus, the Mediator of the New Testament, and the blood which speaketh better things than that of Abel."

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